

Testimony from Deaunteze Bobo, MCF-Rush City

Re: HF 2349 (HF 1078, Article 4)

Submitted by Jay Claire, TC IWOC

April 4, 2021

Mr. Chair,

My name is Deaunteze Bobo. I'm 33 years old. I'm here to support the MRRRA and ask that it be extended to everyone inside.

I was raised in south Minneapolis until I was 18. At that point in 2006 I was incarcerated and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 30 years for aiding & abetting a drive by shooting. I am not guilty of this actual crime, though I am guilty of the lifestyle and the people I chose to embrace. Due to my upbringing it was a habitual lifestyle. I was so naive to the world I thought you had to go out the country to be on a beach. My only role models was pimps, dope fiends and drug dealers. No one went to school nor was we forced to.

In 2007 I arrived to Rush City prison, where they had no programs for long-term offenders. I was a lost boy with little hope of freedom, an unknown peer following and the bare minimum knowledge of leadership skills.

I was personally blessed to have been around a group of ex-violent offenders who helped shape my thinking and open my eyes to things in life that was never exposed or taught to me before.

As time passed, I noticed young guys coming into prison with the same lack of knowledge I had, with no understanding of how to find themselves. It was also a trait I seen in most elders. Many fall into the basic prison routines: gambling, fighting and drugs, until it becomes a habit. New and young offenders tend to watch, respect and learn from long-term offenders.

A group of us violent offenders came together to help try to change the culture of Rush City Prison. We got involved in the Rush City Lifers Group, Parenting, Restorative Justice, Victim Impact, Thinking 4 A Change, Power of People, Houses of Healing,

Peacekeeping groups, Anger Management and religious groups that many offenders didn't really attend.

So not only did we participate, we started facilitating and advertising the groups, so many would attend. These programs brought in young gang members, we stopped gang beefs and helped many better themselves. The recidivism rate for long-term offenders is low. I personally believe violent offenders should also be rewarded and reevaluated for their rehabilitation. Not all violent offender crimes were intentional, some violent offenders were misled or manipulated. Prison isn't the only place men are vulnerable adults. If you want prison culture to change you have to offer those who set the tone the chance to be the change.

We are here being the change, we ask you to empower our efforts, and pass the MRRRA without exceptions for what charges people are in for.